

Testimony in Support of S.B. 184, An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding Election Administration as a Result of COVID-19 and Concerning Eligibility to Vote by Absentee Ballot

Dear Chairs Flexer and Fox, Vice Chairs Haskell and Thomas, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is David Acquah-Mensah and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 184, An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding Election Administration as a Result of COVID-19 and Concerning Eligibility to Vote by Absentee Ballot**. This bill would make the pandemic an acceptable excuse for requesting an absentee ballot for the 2022 midterm election, following similar decisions for 2020 and 2021 elections in Connecticut. The recent spike in COVID-19 cases is still fresh in our minds, serving as a reminder that the pandemic is still very much present and constantly changing. We do not know what the state of the world will be in November; for that reason, it is critical that voters are given the autonomy to vote in whatever manner will best serve the health of both them and their families in 2022.

In light of the pandemic, Connecticut instituted no-excuse absentee ballot voting in the 2020 presidential election. During that election, the state saw no significant increase in credible reports of voter fraud and fewer than 1% of absentee ballots were rejected for any reason. The Omicron variant and the subsequent BA.2 variant are far more contagious than the dominant strain of COVID-19 from the 2020 election cycle. The success of our 2020 election should be enough evidence that making the pandemic an acceptable excuse for absentee voting will be a boon for voters in this year's election cycle.

In conclusion, I urge you to support S.B. 184 and provide equal access to the ballot for all, regardless of their comfort level during the pandemic. Especially with COVID-19 having a disproportionately dangerous impact on Black, Brown, and low-income communities and individuals, there is no reason to force voters to cast their ballots in person during a time of such strong uncertainty. Senior citizens, immunocompromised voters, Black/Brown voters, low-income voters, and any voters afraid of contracting COVID-19 at the polls deserve to participate in the midterm election—and every election, for that matter—without feeling as if they must risk their lives to do so, and absentee voting will provide all Connecticut voters with that comfort. I implore you to favorably vote this bill out of the Government Administration and Elections Committee so that every voter can feel safe exercising their Constitutional right to vote this election season.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

David Acquaaah-Mensah
New Haven, CT